

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 02876 01 OF 02 211813Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----108725 211815Z /41

O 211804Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3364
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 02876

EXDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PDEV, UK, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: SECOND OWEN-SITHOLE MEETING

REF: LONDON 2831

1. EMBASSY OFFICER ATTENDED SECOND OWEN-SITHOLE MEETING MORNING OF FEBRUARY 21. DISCUSSION HAD MUCH OF THE SAME TONE AND SUBSTANCE OF YESTERDAY'S SESSION. SITHOLE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT SMITH'S REMOVAL WOULD GO A LONG WAY IN ENHANCING THE CREDIBILITY OF A SETTLEMENT, BUT AS DESIRABLE AS IT MIGHT BE, IT WAS NOT REALISTIC. OWEN SAID HE COULD APPRECIATE SITHOLE'S DILEMMA. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT IF SMITH REMAINS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 LONDON 02876 01 OF 02 211813Z

THEN HIS POSITION MUST BE CLEARLY SUBORDINATE TO THE TRANSFER OF POWER, E.G. SMITH SHOULD NOT LEAD THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL NOR SHOULD HE HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LAW AND ORDER.

2. SITHOLE SAID HE AGREED THAT A PLACE IN THE TRANSITION SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR NKOMO AND THAT NKOMO SHOULD

BE ABLE TO ACCEPT AN OFFER "WITH HONOR." NKOMO, HOWEVER, CANNOT EXPECT A SPECIAL PLACE IN THE TRANSITION NOR WOULD HE BE WELCOME IF HE REPRESENTS FOREIGN INTERESTS. NKOMO AND HIS ARMY MUST SUBMIT THEMSELVES TO A GENERAL POLITICAL AGREEMENT WHICH TRANSFERS POWER TO THE PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE, NOT TO ANY PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP. SITHOLE SAID HE WAS UNHAPPY THAT THE US AND UK APPEARED TO REGARD NKOMO AS THE CENTER-PIECE OF ANY AGREEMENT. GOPO, SPEAKING MORE DIRECTLY, SAID NKOMO AND HIS ARMY (WHICH UNLIKE ZANU HAS HELD BACK FROM THE FIGHTING) HAS LOST CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT INSIDE RHODESIA. IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE WHAT COULD BE OFFERED TO NKOMO THAT HAD NOT ALREADY BEEN TRIED. OWEN AGREED THAT IT MIGHT PROVE IMPOSSIBLE TO ATTRACT NKOMO INTO THE TALKS BUT HE HAS A SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL FOLLOWING INSIDE RHODESIA AND THE EFFORT MUST THEREFORE BE MADE.

3. OWEN DEALT AT LENGTH WITH THE DIFFICULTIES THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS WILL ENCOUNTER IN FINDING A "NEUTRAL" CHAIRMAN FOR THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND, POSSIBLY, FOR THE LAW AND ORDER PORTFOLIO. HE POINTED OUT THAT AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT WILL BE TECHNICALLY AS "ILLEGAL" IN INTERNATIONAL EYES AS THE CURRENT REGIME AND THAT A CHAIRMAN WOULD BE TAKING OVER AN OUTLAW GOVERNMENT IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR -- NOT A VERY CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 LONDON 02876 01 OF 02 211813Z

DESIRABLE ASSIGNMENT. HE ADDED THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO LEGALIZE THE

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PAGE 01 LONDON 02876 02 OF 02 211811Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 02876

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SITUATION IN RHODESIA UNTIL THERE HAD BEEN A CLEAR
DEMONSTRATION THAT THE SETTLEMENT IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE
LARGE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION. OWEN AGAIN STRESSED
THAT THE TERMS OF THE CONSTITUTION MUST POINTEDLY
REJECT THE PARTICIPATION OF THE 28 WHITE ASSEMBLY
MEMBERS IN THE ELECTION OR IMPEACHMENT OF A PRESIDENT,
OR IN THE FORMATION OF A GOVERNMENT. MOREOVER, HE
REITERATED THAT THE WORLD MUST SEE A GENUINE EFFORT
TO INCLUDE THE PATRIOTIC FRONT IN THE TALKS.

4. COMMENT: SITHOLE LISTENED CAREFULLY TO OWEN'S
THOUGHTS ON THE NECESSARY TERMS OF THE CONSTITUTION AND
ON THE FORMATION OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT. HE
APPRECIATED THAT THE INTERNAL NATIONALISTS COULD ILL
AFFORD ANY FURTHER CONCESSIONS TO SMITH. HE WAS ALSO
RESPONSIVE TO THE NEED TO INCLUDE NKOMO IN A SETTLEMENT
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PAGE 02 LONDON 02876 02 OF 02 211811Z

BUT DEMONSTRATED LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR THE DILEMMA OF
HIS FELLOW NATIONALIST. SITHOLE AGAIN SEEMED DIS-
APPOINTED BY THE WEST'S "PREOCCUPATION" WITH THE
PATRIOTIC FRONT, INSISTING THAT THE INTERNAL SIDE HAS
ACHIEVED EXACTLY WHAT WE HAVE DEMANDED. AT ONE POINT
HE SAID IT WAS NO LONGER NECESSARY TO MARRY THE ANGLO-
AMERICAN PROPOSALS TO THE SALISBURY TALKS BECAUSE
THE "MARRIAGE HAS ALREADY BEEN CONSUMMATED."

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